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## Dredging Up Our Old Mistakes

Harry Truman, when he was president, had a little sign on his desk. It said, "The buck stops here." That was Mr. Truman's way of saying what President Kennedy has been saying about the Cuban fiasco. The responsibility, ultimately, must lie with the man who is, right now, President of the United States. Mr. Kennedy was manfully takes full responsibility for whatever errors were made in the estimate of the Cuban situation, says he doesn't want anybody digging under the covers to see who might have been in the bed before he lay down in it.

Mr. Kennedy's charitable, and realistic, view of the situation will not be shared by all Democrats. Understandably, many Democrats remember "China," the China which, in the Republican phrase of the day, "we lost." It has taken the Democrats 10 years to live down responsibility for "losing" China. Now they may be excused if they root around to learn who "lost" us Cuba in 1959 and 1960.

The inquiries, and there will be inquiries, will be in two areas. What happened to our intelligence estimates of the rumored "resistance" inside Cuba? How come we were so friendly with Castro in the first place?

The first inquiry is better taken than the second, partly because we may yet be able to do something about it. By "intelligence" we have come to mean the Central Intelligence Agency, a super secret behemoth that operates on a budget of unknown size in unknown ways. Most Americans will concede that such an agency needs a great deal of secrecy if it is to function. But they may in turn demand high quality performance. If they don't get it, they can demand drastic reforms in the CIA. The rub comes in examining the patient. How much can Congress, not to mention the public, be trusted to know about a cloak-and-dagger operation like CIA?

The second inquiry—our too-late realization of the kind of revolution Castro led—is likely to be the nasty one.

Florida's Sen. George Smathers is most upset about the way the Eisenhower administration handled intelligence reports coming out of Cuba before Castro came to power. He and Lyle C. Wilson, a United Press man, assert that some of these reports, showing that Castro was untrustworthy and certainly no democrat, never reached the high command levels of the administration. Senator Smathers wants a house cleaning in the state department. (Does this sound familiar? Read the headlines of 1952.) This would lead us to believe that we may see a state department blood bath that will be as irritating to Republicans as the similar venture into vengeance was irritating to Democrats 10 years ago.

We may take lessons from 10 years ago. Rare, indeed, was the state department official who was actually disloyal, who was truly subversive. Some were soft-headed, which is no crime. Others were, themselves, victims of bad information. Such a situation is undoubtedly still true. But if what Senator Smathers and Mr. Wilson suggest is true, if information damaging to Castro actually was withheld from top policy officials, then heads ought to roll—and we ought to learn exactly why it was withheld.

The human animal, in his personal relationships and in his organizations, learns from his mistakes. We made a big one in welcoming Castro, in entertaining him royally in America just two years ago and in making his rise to power so easy. Our error, and it was an error, was in assuming that anybody who opposes a dictator is, perforce, a fine fellow. We made that mistake with Stalin. We made it with Castro. And there are those who say we are making it with Franco.

The important thing is to recognize the mistakes we have made. Often they have been mistakes of public attitude rather than cupidity or venality from high places. So if there have been mistakes, let's have them trotted out for us to see. But let's look at them intelligently and let's try to avoid the 1950-style witch hunts that serve more to incite and confuse than they do to enlighten.